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MINISTERS STRAHL AND TOEWS HELP LAUNCH POLICING PROGRAM FOR ABORIGINAL YOUTH

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WINNIPEG (MAY 23, 2008) – The Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, and Minister Vic Toews, President of the Treasury Board and Federal Regional Minister for Manitoba, participated today in the launch of an innovative program designed to prepare Aboriginal youth to become police officers with various law enforcement agencies.

"This is an excellent example of the critical role that the Government of Canada plays in facilitating partnerships," says Minister Strahl, "and in this case the payoff is huge. Law enforcement agencies are going to have access to skilled, well-trained Aboriginal students who will be able to support their own communities."

Based on a $65,000 contribution from the Government of Canada and a strategic partnership between the Louis Riel Institute, the University of Winnipeg and various law enforcement agencies, the Indigenous Police Preparation Program will assist the RCMP and other law enforcement agencies in western Canada with their critical Indigenous recruiting strategies by providing well-trained and better prepared Aboriginal students.

"This program will serve the dual purpose of providing trained recruits to law enforcement agencies who need them, as well as role models to communities that rarely see their culture and identity reflected in mainstream institutions," said Minister Toews.

The program is designed to provide Aboriginal youth who are interested in pursuing careers in the law enforcement field with an eight-month program including academics, interview, life skills and physical training. This will ensure a greater chance of success in terms of both applying for and gaining employment in the law enforcement field.

Jennifer Rattray of the University of Winnipeg is excited about the venture. "This partnership is fantastic and would not have been possible without the support of the Government of Canada," she says.

The Government of Canada through the Office of the Federal Interlocutor Contribution Program has made investments to develop the curriculum upon which the Indigenous Police Preparation Program will be based. Once in place, the program will be self-sufficient and financed through student fees alone.

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